

Fruits and Veggies at the Preschool

Background, resources and activities for teaching preschool children



Diets rich in fruits and vegetables may reduce the risk of some types of cancer and other chronic diseases.

Program background

The 5 A Day for Better Health Program is a nationwide initiative to increase Americans' consumption of fruits and vegetables to promote good health and reduce the risk of some cancers and other chronic diseases. The Program's strength comes from the combined efforts and resources of its partners including:

- American Cancer Society
- American Diabetes Association
- American Heart Association
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
- Council of 5 A Day Coordinators
- National Alliance for Nutrition and Activity
- National Cancer Institute
- Produce for Better Health Foundation
- Produce Marketing Association
- United Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Association
- United States Department of Agriculture



Health Benefits

Fruits and vegetables are low in fat and rich in fiber, vitamins, minerals, and phytochemicals. A diet rich in fruits and vegetables may help maintain:

- Lower risk of some cancers
- Healthy heart
- Healthy immune system
- Cholesterol levels that are already healthy
- Healthy aging
- Memory function
- Urinary tract health
- Vision health
- Strong bones and teeth

Recommendations

Eating lots of fruits and vegetables every day is a key element of MyPyramid.gov – a part of the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. **The daily amount for each preschooler varies by age, sex, and activity level.**

- ▶ For boys, the range is 2 to 3 cups
- ▶ For girls, the range is 2 to 2½ cups
- ▶ For specific recommendations for your child, visit <http://www.mypyramid.gov> or call the 5 A Day Program for a free copy of *How Many Fruits and Vegetables Do Boys/Girls Need?*

Because too much fruit juice may lead to tooth decay and overweight. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends limiting daily fruit juice to:

- ▶ 4-6 ounces per day for 1-6 year olds
- ▶ 8-12 ounces pre day for 7-18 year olds

Fact Sheet for Parents

"More Peas, Please!" a ready-to-copy fact sheet, provides parents of young children with ideas and recipes to help kids eat more fruits and vegetables. Request a copy by phone or e-mail.

Lending Library

The 5 A Day materials in the DPHS Lending Library range from music CDs to videos to curricula with recipes, handouts, and activity ideas. Here's a sampling:

- *Arizona 5 A Day for Better Health Fruit and Vegetable Activity Book for Child Care Programs*
- *Eat the Alphabet* (book)
- *Growing Vegetable Soup* (book)
- *Color Way Creative Pockets Kit*
- *Fruit and Veggie Recall* (game)
- ▶ Materials can be delivered to your local NH public library
- ▶ Call the 5 A Day Program (271-4830) for a **list** of the audio-visual and print materials in the collection.
- ▶ To **reserve / borrow** materials, call the DPHS Lending Library directly at 603-271-0562 or 603-271-7060

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Frequently Asked Questions

What Does a Tennis Ball Have to Do with Fruits and Vegetables?

Answer: 1 cup of fruit or vegetable is the same size as a tennis ball. Here are a few examples.

- Apple: 1 small
- Banana: 1 large
- Broccoli: 3 5-inch spears
- Carrots: 2 medium
- Grapefruit: 1 medium
- Peach: 1 large
- Potato: 1 medium



Leafy vegetables

- Raw spinach, kale, collards, mustard greens, and lettuce are leafy vegetables.
- Because they have a lot of space between the leaves, 1 cup of raw leafy vegetables counts as ½ cup.
- ½ cup cooked leafy vegetables counts as ½ cup of your daily intake.

Dried fruit

- Raisins are dried grapes. Prunes are dried plums. Other dried fruits include apricots, dates and dried apples, mango and pineapple.
 - As fruit dries, it gets smaller. For that reason, ¼ cup dried fruit counts as ½ cup.
- Call for a free copy of *What Does a Tennis Ball Have to Do with Fruits and Vegetables?*.

What Counts?

Fresh, frozen, canned, jarred, and dried fruits and vegetables all count (except coconuts, olives, and nuts) as long as:

- There is no added fat.
- There is no added sugar (sucrose, glucose, dextrose, fructose, maltose, lactose, sorbitol, mannitol, honey, corn syrup, corn syrup solids or molasses).

Juices should be 100% juice or juice concentrate with no added fat or sugar.



What About Coconuts, Olives, or Nuts?

- Because they are high in fat, coconuts, olives, and nuts cannot be promoted in association with 5 A Day.
- Products and recipes with coconut, olives, or nuts can be promoted in association with 5 A Day if they meet the 5 A Day Recipe Criteria.

Start a Fruit and Veggie Team

Working with a team increases creativity and strengthens outcomes. Ask others to join your 5 A Day team to help you plan fruit and veggie promotions at your preschool.

- Other program staff members
- Preschool nurse/health educator
- Public librarian
- UNH Cooperative Extension
- Parents and grandparents
- Community dietitians – try the hospital's community education department
- College students from the nutrition, dietetics, family and consumer sciences, nursing, and education departments

What's a 5 A Day Recipe?

An official 5 A Day recipe:

- Must contribute at least ½ cup of fruit and / or vegetable per serving.
- May not contain more than
 - 30% of calories from fat
 - 10% of calories from saturated fat
 - 100 mg of cholesterol per serving
 - 480 mg of sodium per serving

Fruits and Veggies Online: Recipes and Information

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

<http://www.cdc.gov/5aday>

Produce for Better Health Foundation

<http://www.5aday.com>

<http://pbhfoundation.org>

Dole Food Company

<http://www.dole5aday.com>

US Department of Agriculture

<http://www.nal.usda.gov>



Quantity Recipe Cookbook

If you ever need recipes that serve 25-100, here's a great resource. All 40 fruit and vegetable based recipes conform to USDA recipe format.

www.dhhs.nh.gov/DHHS/NHP/

Activity Ideas

Plan a Special Week!

- Do one or two fruit and veggie activities each day.
- Hold a challenge for students and their families.
- If you prepare meals on site, offer healthy fruit and veggie choices
- End the week with a celebration. Invite parents and grandparents. Include fruit and veggie costumes, hats, placemats, and music.
- ▶ For details on all these ideas see pages 3-4.

Music and Language Arts

- Name a fruit or vegetable for every letter of the alphabet.
- Ask your librarian or a bookstore about stories, riddles, poetry, and music about fruits, vegetables, gardens, orchards, shopping, cooking, eating, and physical activity.
- ▶ Call us for a copy of the *Fruit and Veggie Book List*.
- ▶ Borrow music from the Lending Library (page 1). Many include ideas for dancing and movement:
 - *5 A Day Live Musical Performance Kit and Cassette* complete with script, sheet music, costume and scenery ideas.
 - *5 A Day Rap and Jammin' Songs*
 - *Groovin' Foods Music CD*
 - *Smart Fruit and Veggie Songs Music CD*
 - *Veggie Power! Music CD*



Flavors, Textures, and Smells

- Try different fruits and vegetables. Talk about the different flavors, textures and smells.
- Hold a "blind" taste test – using a blind fold. Can students name the fruit or vegetable they are tasting?



Cooking

- Offer a "24 Karat Luncheon" with carrot sticks, carrot soup, and carrot cake.
- Demonstrate a fruit or veggie recipe.
- Try a recipe from another country.

Shapes and Numbers

- Count the seeds in one apple, pear, grapefruit, orange, slice of banana. Count the eyes on a potato.
- Serves slices of star fruit, banana, and carrots. Cut the banana on an angle to get ovals.
- Compare the shapes of different fruits and vegetables – for example: broccoli, banana, squash, apple and different melons.
- Cut an apple in half – horizontally – to reveal a star.
- Introduce elementary fractions by cutting an apple in half and then quarters.

The World

- Where do fruits and vegetables grow? How does produce get to our stores?
- Research this festival on the Internet – the Feast of Radishes, December 23, in Oaxaca, Mexico. Create ways you can celebrate with your students.



- Ask students to bring in donations – canned fruits and vegetables – for the local food bank.

Voting

Have students vote for their favorite fruit and veggie. This is a great way to introduce math and graphing concepts.

- Link this activity to a taste test so the children get a chance to learn about the "candidates."
- Set up a poster-size fruit and vegetable ballot with pictures of each "candidate." Give each child two stickers to use for placing their votes for one fruit and one veggie. Invite adults to participate.
- This makes a great media event – invite the press!
- ▶ For more ideas, request a copy of *It's an Election Year . . . Run a Produce Campaign!*



Movement

- **Beanbag Games** Use fruit and veggie beanbags in games.
- **Team Names** Name teams for fruits and veggies that are fuzzy; shiny; purple; red; etc.
- **Imagination** Imitate a growing seed, an apple tree during a storm; a cherry tree being visited by birds; an ear of corn being picked, husked, boiled, and eaten!
- **Produce Relay** Have players use a spoon to balance increasingly bigger fruits and vegetables – a grape, an apricot, an orange, and a potato.
- **Fruit Basket Upset** Form a circle and sit on the floor. Have each student pick a fruit name. Ask for a volunteer to stand in the center. The child in the center calls the names of two or more fruits. The students with those names get up and run to exchange places before the caller gets their spot. The one without a spot is the new caller. If the caller says "Fruit Basket Upset," everyone exchanges places.
- **Beans, Beans, Corn.** (Duck, Duck, Goose) Sit on the floor in a circle. "It" begins by walking around the circle saying "beans, beans, beans,..." until s/he taps someone and says "corn." The two run in opposite directions, trying to get back to the empty space first. The one who does not is the new "it."
- **The Talking Turnip** (Mother May I) Use active commands like, "The Talking Turnip says play tennis . . . jump rope . . . swim . . . run in place . . . tap your shoulders . . . eat a carrot . . . plant a garden."
- **Raining on the Orchard** Form a circle; arms-length apart. The leader stands in the center facing one person and rubs his/her hands together. As the leader slowly turns in place, the circle gradually joins in. Repeat with louder actions – snapping fingers, slapping thighs, stamping feet! Then, reverse until the storm is over.



Gardening

- Plant something in the classroom and watch it grow. Try date, orange or grapefruit seeds. Grow an avocado seed or sweet potato in a jar of water.
- Take a field trip to a greenhouse or farm.
- Name produce items that grow on trees, in the ground. Which are roots, leaves, seeds, seed pods, stems, fruits?
- Plant a garden. Libraries and seed catalogs may be helpful sources of information. Seed catalogs are a good source of photos and required growing conditions.
- Plant a pizza garden with basil, tomatoes, broccoli, onions, etc. Serve your harvest at a pizza party.
- ▶ Check **Resources for Promoting Fruits and Veggies** for organizations that offer free seeds.
- ▶ For expert gardening advice and more, call the **UNH Cooperative Extension Family, Home and Garden Education Center** at 877-EXT-GROW (877-877-398-4769).



Colors and Textures

- Study the colors and textures of fruits and veggies. Make a drawing, painting, or collage of a basket filled with produce.
- Make fruit and veggie placemats, magnets, hats, and headbands.
- Dress in the color of your favorite fruit or veggie.
- Name fruits and vegetables that are fuzzy, shiny, rough, red, green, purple, etc.
- Put different fruits/vegetables (one at a time) inside a "mystery box" and have students guess what's inside.
- Start with a picture of a fruit bowl or basket on Monday. Each day, taste a new produce item and add it to the picture. By the end of the week the collage will be complete!

Take the Challenge

Challenge students and their families to:

- Taste a new fruit or vegetable every day for a week. Offer the item in the classroom and cooking information for the parents.
- Try a new fruit or vegetable recipe.
- Try a new fruit or vegetable each day.

Students can track their progress by adding fruit and veggie stickers to a headband.



**Do you have a new idea
for teaching 5 A Day
to preschool students?
We have room for
your original idea!**